

**TESTING REFORM: CREATING A
NEW VISION FOR ASSESSMENT
SUMMARY OF PILOT PROPOSAL**

Presented by:

**Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment,
Testing and Evaluation**

Business Coalition for Educational Excellence

In Partnership with

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THE VISION

New Jersey is committed to developing a balanced state assessment system that places equal weight on performance-based assessments and traditional paper and pencil tests for reporting and accountability purposes. This balanced assessment system will address the two essential functions of a state assessment system – 1) a fair system of accountability for the achievement of all students; and 2) a means of providing educators with meaningful information to address the educational needs of individual students.

OVERVIEW

On April 25, 2002, Governor James E. McGreevey and Commissioner of Education William L. Librera joined with an historic alliance of New Jersey's business and education leaders to endorse *A Call to Action for Assessment Reform*, a comprehensive blueprint for reforming assessment in New Jersey. A major focus of *A Call to Action* is the development of a balanced student assessment system; one that includes both traditional paper and pencil tests and state-approved, locally-administered and locally-scored performance assessments. Taken together, the results of such a system will provide educators with far more comprehensive information on student achievement, and critical diagnostic information that will aid teachers in addressing the educational needs of individual students. Implementation of this balanced system creates significant opportunities for education reform, but also raises considerable technical challenges that must be carefully addressed through a well-planned pilot project.

A major component of *A Call to Action* is the implementation of a pilot project in the area of performance-based assessment. The State of New Jersey is committed to funding a five-year pilot project to develop a system of performance assessments linked to each area of New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. This report provides an overview of the processes and timelines that will be utilized in the CREATE / BCEE pilot project.

GOALS

1. To develop high quality performance assessments that are a) aligned with the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards in each of the academic content areas, technology literacy and workforce readiness; and b) in combination with traditional paper and pencil tests provide a deeper assessment of student understanding
2. To verify that the performance assessments can be successfully implemented in a representative sample of New Jersey school districts
3. To develop recommendations for the NJDOE for statewide implementation
4. To complete an external evaluation of the performance assessments for item quality, alignment with the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards, validity and reliability

DEFINITION OF PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

A performance based assessment task is a structured task (same task under same conditions at approximately the same time in all districts) that is scored by local educators based on a single state-required rubric (scoring criteria). The performance assessment is the application of theoretical knowledge (as represented in the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards) to real life situations.

FUNDING FOR THE PILOT PROJECT

The State of New Jersey has committed to providing \$750,000 for the initial year of the pilot project. In addition the Business Coalition for Education Excellence will provide \$100,000 to support the initiative. The Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing and Evaluation will provide more than \$400,000 of in-kind support for the project. The level of funding required for implementation of the pilot project in subsequent years will be determined during the initial year of the pilot project.

SELECTION OF PILOT DISTRICTS

In the first year of the pilot project, nine districts will be selected to participate, representing a cross section of New Jersey. Only districts that are highly motivated, knowledgeable and committed will be part of the pilot project. The commitment must be clear from all levels, including board of education, superintendent, administration and teachers.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A letter of invitation and formal application to participate will be sent to all school districts from Commissioner of Education William Librera in November, indicating the timeline for districts to respond and the criteria that will be applied in the selection process. CREATE and BCEE will then select the initial pilot districts. We anticipate selecting pilot districts by January, 2003 and beginning implementation of the pilot shortly thereafter.

BENEFITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PILOT DISTRICTS

Each pilot district will receive funding for professional development of their staff in the area of performance-based assessment. Each pilot district will also have access to a professional development consultant with expertise in performance assessment. In addition, teachers and administrators from the pilot districts will receive informational materials regarding the development, implementation, scoring and oversight of performance-based assessments. Each pilot district will, in turn, be expected to permit teachers from designated grade levels to participate in three three-day conferences throughout the school year in order to development performance-based assessments. Pilot districts will also be expected to develop and implement a professional development plan for their staff, with the assistance of an assigned professional development consultant. Pilot districts will be expected to provide time for educators to administer and score performance-based assessments.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES

YEAR-ONE

- Nine pilot districts that represent a cross-section of NJ schools (region, wealth, achievement levels, minority demographics, etc.), with a three-year commitment.
- Extensive professional development and technical assistance will be provided to each pilot district prior to and during the development of the assessments.
- Each pilot district will develop three to four performance assessments for each grade -- three, six and high school, in the content areas of Language Arts, Mathematics and Science.
- Each pilot district will begin initial implementation and scoring of the performance assessments in at least one elementary, middle and high school in the district.
- “Trust but verify” teams will review a random sample of locally scored performance assessments to determine validity, consistency, etc. and to develop recommendations for revisions in year two.
- A professional development plan will be developed and implementation will begin to prepare educators in all of the districts’ schools for implementation of the performance assessments beginning in year-two.
- The NJDOE will begin working with CREATE and BCEE to develop formula for calculating single proficiency level.

YEAR-TWO

- The nine year-one pilot districts from the first cohort will:
 - Revise as needed and hone the work from year-one to ensure alignment, reliability and validity.
 - Continue professional development and implement the performance assessments developed in year-one, in all schools in the district.
 - Develop three to four performance assessments for each grade – four, five, seven, eight, and high school, in the content areas of Language Arts, Mathematics and Science.
 - Implement the performance assessments in grades four, five, seven, eight, and high school, in one elementary, middle and high school in the district.
- At least 12 additional pilot districts (at least one in each county altogether, assuming sufficient funding is available) will serve as second cohort pilot districts for two years. They will be trained by the first cohort of pilot districts, and will (in one school at grades three, six and high school) implement the performance assessments developed by the first cohort of pilot districts to validate the performance assessments in a wider sample of districts, and to develop the professional development model needed to ensure effective and consistent administration and scoring.
- Begin to explore the development and use of performance assessments in an interdisciplinary fashion to assess student performance in all seven of the content areas.

- The NJDOE will contract to begin an evaluation by an unbiased, external entity to ensure high quality and alignment with NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards.
- “Trust but verify” teams will review a random sample of locally scored performance assessments to determine validity, consistency, etc. and to develop recommendations for revisions in year-three.
- The NJDOE (in partnership with pilot districts, CREATE and BCEE) will begin regional training forums on performance assessments.
- The NJDOE will continue to work with CREATE and BCEE to
 - Develop formula for calculating single proficiency level
 - Develop a method of reporting assessment results to the State Board, the public, and the federal government
 - Develop a system of accountability that holds all participants accountable for achievement results.

YEAR-THREE

- Full implementation of the performance assessments will be achieved in all of the schools in each of the first cohort pilot districts in grades three through eight, and high school in Language Arts, Mathematics and Science.
- Full implementation of the performance assessments will be achieved in all of the schools in each of the second cohort pilot districts in grades three, six and high school in Language Arts, Mathematics and Science
- Implementation of the performance assessments will be achieved in at least one elementary, middle and high school in each of the second cohort of pilot districts in Language Arts, Mathematics and Science for grades four, five, seven and eight.
- “Trust but verify” teams validate performance assessments to ensure reliability, validity, consistency, etc.
- The NJDOE (in partnership with the pilot districts, CREATE and BCEE) will provide training to every district on implementation of performance assessments.
- The pilot districts begin exploration of the feasibility of developing a process for using a local anthology of approved performance assessments to aid in determining student proficiency.
- The NJDOE will complete work with CREATE and BCEE to develop a formula for determining a single level of proficiency from the results of standardized tests and performance assessments.

YEARS-FOUR AND FIVE

- The NJDOE will implement performance assessments statewide in all New Jersey school districts.
- The process of developing and implementing performance assessments in all other content areas will begin.
- The NJDOE will implement the system to determine a single proficiency level from the results of standardized tests and performance assessments.
- The pilot districts will begin exploration of the feasibility of developing a process for using a local anthology of approved performance assessments to aid in determining student proficiency.

